

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PHNOM 05253 221257Z

40

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-10 ISO-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01 SSO-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 OPR-02 AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

SY-05 /070 W

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O P 221212Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9931

INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY SAIGON PRIORITY

USMISSION USUN NY PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 5253

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, CB

SUBJECT: MARCH 22, THE 81ST DAY OF THE OFFENSIVE

REF: PHNOM PENH 5192

1. SUMMARY: THE US AIRLIFT WAS SUSPENDED EARLY ON MARCH 22 AFTER ROCKET FRAGMENTS STRUCK A DC-8 AND A C-130 PARKED ON THE UNLOADING RAMP. BOTH PLANES WERE DAMAGED AND ARE STILL AT POCHENTONG. NO AMERICANS WERE INJURED, BUT A NUMBER OF KHMER CARGO HANDLERS WERE KILLED AND WOUNDED. THE FANK OPERATION AT TUOL LEAP DESIGNED TO PUSH THE ROCKETEERS OUT OF RANGE OF POCHENTONG AGAIN MADE NO PROGRESS. THE KC ARE PUTTING HEAVY PRESSURE ON AN ISLAND NORTH OF NEAK LUONG AND FRIENDLY TROOPS THERE MAY HAVE TO ABANDON THEIR POSITIONS. THREE MORE POSITIONS IN BATTAMBANG PROVINCE FELL TO THE KC. THERE ARE REPORTS THAT THE KC ARE USING A FORM OF TEAR GAS AGAINST 3RD DIVISION ELEMENTS SOUTH OF ROUTE 4. END SUMMARY.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 PHNOM 05253 221257Z

2. ABOUT TWENTY 107MM ROCKETS LANDED ON OR NEAR POCHENTONG AND TWO OF THEM WHICH HIT DURING THE MORNING OF MARCH 22 RESULTED IN THE SUSPENSION OF THE AIRLIFT. THE FIRST LANDED NEAR AN UNLOADING C-130 DAMAGING ITS TIRES AND CAUSING THE SHUT-DOWN OF ITS ENGINES. A NEARBY DC-8 WAS DAMAGED IN THE WING, CAUSING AN ENGINE TO BEGIN TO BURN. THE CREWS OF BOTH PLANES DEPARTED POCHENTONG ON OTHER AIRCRAFT. THE AIRLIFT RESUMED UNTIL SHORTLY THEREAFTER WHEN ANOTHER ROCKET LANDED IN THE SAME AREA, REPORTEDLY KILLING TWO KHMER CARGO HANDLERS AND WOUNDING TEN. THE AIRLIFT WAS THEN SUSPENDED FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE DAY. THE FANK OPERATION NORTHWEST OF POCHENTONG DESIGNED TO CLEAR OUT THE ENEMY FORCES LAUNCHING THE ROCKETS AGAINST THE AIRFIELD AGAIN MADE NO PROGRESS. A MORE SUBSTANTIAL EFFORT IS PLANNED FOR TOMORROW, COMBINING HEAVY AIR ATTACKS IN COORDINATION WITH INFANTRY ADVANCES.

3. KC ACTIONS AROUND THE NEAK LUONG-BANAM AREA CONTINUED HEAVY, ALTHOUGH FANK KILLED 20 KC SOLDIERS IN ONE ENGAGEMENT. THE KC ARE PUTTING HEAVY PRESSURE ON AN ISLAND NORTH OF NEAK LUONG WHERE KHMER NAVY BOATS SEEK COVER FROM ENEMY FIRE. THERE ARE REPORTS THAT THE KC ARE FERRYING ADDITIONAL TROOPS TO THE ISLAND AND THAT FRIENDLY FORCES ON THE ISLAND MAY HAVE TO ABANDON IT. SHOULD THIS OCCUR, KC TROOPS ON THE WEST BANK OF THE MEKONG WILL HAVE REDUCED THEIR LAST TARGET AND COULD DIRECT THEIR ATTENTIONS UP RIVER TOWARD PHNOM PENH.

4. THREE MORE GOVERNMENT POSITIONS IN BATTAMBANG PROVINCE IN NORTHWESTERN CAMBODIA WERE LOST AS THE PROCESS OF GRADUAL EROSION IN THAT AREA CONTINUES (REFTEL). TWO OF THE POSITIONS ARE NORTHEAST OF BATTAMBANG CITY AND THE THIRD TO THE SOUTHWEST. NONE OF THESE ACTIONS ARE CLOSE TO THE CITY ITSELF BUT POINT UP THE PROBLEMS IN AN AREA WHICH THROUGHOUT THE WAR HAS BY AND LARGE BEEN SECURE AND UNDER GKR CONTROL. THIS IS NO LONGER THE CASE.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 PHNOM 05253 221257Z

5. FANK UNITS ON THE EAST BANK OF THE MEKONG OPPOSITE PHNOM PENH KILLED SOME 40 ENEMY SOLDIERS YESTERDAY, BUT SEVERAL GOVERNMENT POSITIONS REMAIN UNDER HEAVY PRESSURE.
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